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This paper presents the author's experience of Existentialism and its relationship to the counseling process. The basic concepts of the philosophy are presented, described in terms of personal experience, then translated into operational behavior, with the focus on the development of the Existentialist oriented public-school counseling center. These concepts are used to delineate the scope of Existentialism in counseling: (1) Existence Precedes Essence, the need for a personal experience of definition and creation of one's self, (2) Man Is Condemned To Freedom, the necessity of personal responsibility for one's self and choices, (3) When Man Chooses, He Chooses for All Men, that personal choices define the ideal man and affirm the values of what is chosen, and (4) Man Defines Himself Through His Actions and Only Through His Actions, that what a person does reflects his essence, not what he intends or wishes. (BP)

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THE EXISTENTIALIST COUNSELOR AT WORK

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If it is true that there is a particular philosophy which reflects the Zeitgeist of each age, the philosophy of Existentialism most certainly reflects the anguish of mid-century man as he despairs of Truth in a shattered world. The search for meaning, for encounter, for I-Thou, the confirmation of a universal angst as a basic condition of man, the facing of the loneliness of responsible choices--all these thread contemporary thought as familiar ideas. This is not to imply, however, that the assimilation of this strange, sometimes esoteric, philosophy is easy. Many encounter Existentialism as obscure and Godless, redundant and solipsistic, reactionary and antiestablishment. Yet others who have struggled with the convolutions of Existentialism have found ideas which have been lucid, spiritual, challenging, and comforting. Internalizing the concepts of this philosophy often has been, for those who perservate, a very intense, personal experience. Those who have chosen to define themselves in this philosophical framework have found that walking "I-Thou" with the great of Existentialism demands Tillich's "Courage to Be," (1952). Each who chooses to define his own essence from an Existentialist base pursues with Frankl (1965) the meaning of love, death, and suffering; experience "impassioned thought" with Kierkegaard (1944) and involvement with Sartre (1957). Each shares the "Angst" of Buber (1958), the "Dread" of Marcel, and the "Essence" of Jasper (1956). Yet all find, in the end, that, while encountering the wisdom of Existentialist philosophers is rewarding, each of us must make his own choices, struggle with his own loneliness, create his

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own essence through his actions, and, from his sentence of freedom, write his own signature to life, on which he must stand.

The thoughts that are presented in the following pages concerning Existentialism represent the writer's own struggles with these concepts and thus are written "I-Thou" on a very personal basis--the only way in which they have meaning. The translations of the conceptual model into operational behavior, however, are made on a more impersonal basis. Focus here is on the public school and effort has been made to apply philosophic concepts to current school counseling practice. It is hoped that some basic requirements for an Existentialist oriented counseling center in the public schools have been delineated as the concepts and their application to practice are developed.

Following the above model, each concept is developed, first person, then application to counseling is drawn, third person. "Existence precedes Essence" is the focus of the initial discussion. Subsequent considerations are given to man who is "Condemned to Freedom," who "Chooses for All Men," and who "Defines Himself in Two Worlds Through His Actions." Translation is made of each of these concepts into the behavior of the Existentialist counselor, who also is condemned to freedom, who chooses for all men, and who defines himself in two worlds through his actions. The encounter begins with Existentialism's basic concept: "Existence Precedes Essence."

CONCEPT: EXISTENCE PRECEDES ESSENCE

> Until I experienced the "Existentialist Moment" I was not aware of existing, was unaware of the phenomenon of my own presence in the world. As a child I had been in the pre-existential phase of human life with the security and charm of childhood's innocence. Then abruptly I awoke and saw myself for the first time as being responsible for my own

conduct. I became acutely aware of myself as a person, and I was at once glad and sad. I wanted to return to childhood's security, but I had reached a point beyond which there was no turning back. I liked my new perception of the world with its sophistication, but I was sad that I had the encumbrance of responsibility, for now that I had experienced the "Existential Moment" I was in charge of everything that happened to me. The trauma of this realization awakened in me a pre-existential nostalgia, an aching longing for the return of innocence. But this was lost forever, for having experienced the Existentialist Moment, I had become aware of existing, and now must somehow record my signature of essence.

I found myself thrown into a world void of all prior meaning. I found that I had arrived on the scene of life without a road map of the territory. I knew one and only one certainty--death. Nothing else from this time on was a "given." No script had been written which I could consult. I was given no models, no "grand designs," no assurance that there was a teleological carpet which would unfold as I moved toward death. I was on my own, alone. I knew that I existed. Now I must define myself and try to make meaning out of this world without meaning. I was completely free because there were no <u>a priori</u>. I was faced with the task of creating my world which offered limitless possibilities without pre-established requirements. I existed. I found myself free to define my essence and however I chose to define myself was up to me. I knew that my statement concerning my essence would be unique, just as every man's is unique. I knew that I was different from any human being who ever lived before me or who ever will live after me and I conceived of myself as fluid rather than static, moving rather than still, evolving rather than evolved, never finished.

So I find that I am my own essence giver. My life is an open-ended question to be answered however I choose. There are many times when I cry for the security of someone who will define me in the morass of this dreadful ambiguity where all the certainty I have available is that at the end of my defining, death awaits. I know that I will be flung back into another unknown, perhaps like the unknown from which I was flung, but this time the unknown is ahead of me, an anticipation rather than a residual memory and--a certainty. Between this terrible nothing and nothing I must make a statement concerning my essence. I am filled with angst because of the unknowns which dwell on either side of me. I cry for the security of "givens." I do not like being on my own, alone, undefined, forced to choose whatever I will. I feel a terrible nausea for life welling up in me. I would like to escape by default, to choose not to choose, but then this becomes a choice and I meet myself face to face, filled with angst and despair.

Out of my angst and nausea with life I must make a primeval choice. I must choose to live or choose to die. Since for the moment, I decide to live, I will live my life in such a way so as to deserve something better than nothingness. I

> will use my becoming so as to deny the futility of existence and try to make my life a statement which ought never to be obliterated. Even though I know that in the end it will be. Since essence is up to me, perhaps I can be worthy of existing and undeserving of being lost to the universe. I will try to have the courage to be. I will try to use my encounter with nothingness to affirm myself. I will try to have the courage to demonstrate my worth to a world in which my existence is not in question. I know that I exist, but I am aware that my <u>essence</u> is in question, and I want my essence to be worthy of existing forever.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

The counselee as well as the counselor is faced with the task of defining his essence. This concept is fundamental to the existential view of the nature of man. A counselor cannot define essence for the counselee and both share the human state of being thrown from oblivion into an ambiguous world. It does not follow, however, that counseling is an empty ritual without meaning in the existentialist theoretical framework. At first glance it would seem that this was the case, for if each man must define himself, what possible use could be made of a counselor? If defining essence were an individual task, what place is there for the counseling relationship?

The answer lies in man's essential loneliness. Each man is alone, but is not aware of his loneliness until he touches another human being. Then and only then is he aware of his essential state of isolation. If man were dropped newborn on a lonely isle, and by some miracle survived physically, he would not become human in the existentialist sense. He could not define himself without coming into contact with other humans. It is by interfacing with another that he becomes aware that he exists and it is through this interface that he can define himself. Counseling provides a rare and valuable opportunity to experience one's self through interacting with a professional. Man's need to define essence begs for

opportunities to work with another being skilled in interaction. This essential, human, life-long task should not be left in its entirety to casual relationships, for it is the most important process in which man will be involved, once he discovers that he exists--and must define essence.

The Essence of the Counselor

The counselor cannot change man's essential sentence of having to define himself, but he can midwife the process of becoming. He can walk with a counselee as he struggles with essence. The counselor can share the pain of the constant metamorphosis which is becoming, and by sharing himself, can be catalyst to the process. This sharing of self, however, holds implications for the essence of the counselor. If the counselor is a hurtful human being, a counselee can be hurt. If the counselor is inauthentic, a counselee can be hurt. If a counselor is unskilled, a counselee can be hurt. There is mounting evidence in the literature that counseling can be harmful. The naive and comforting assumption that at worst counseling might be ineffective is no longer tenable. Apparently counselees who come in contact with counselors who are in poor psychological shape may leave the counseling relationship damaged. The responsibility of the profession to insure that this does not happen is obvious as are the implications for the selection and training of counselors. (Carkhuff and Berenson, 1967)

The existentialist concept of "Existence Precedes Essence" involves counseling for the counselor. Since the counselor as well as the counselee is processing himself in becoming, the counselor will need some source of what Carkhuff and Berenson (1967) term "human nourishment." The most elegant and harmonious choice for

the nourishment would be continuous, life-long counseling for the counselor. "Who counsels the counselor?" is a most relevant question and the answer for the practicing existentialist counselor would be someone, as a part of professional training and as a way of professional life. Individual counseling and participating in a "maintenance group" counseling experience should be routine. While the most congruent selection for both individual counselor and group counselor would be another existentialist, any competent professional may be satisfactory. One of the pleasant aspects of the profession is that human nourishment is readily available--at least theoretically.

Defining Essence: Group Process

The existentialist concept of "Existence Precedes Essence" holds implications for the use of the group process as an effective counseling tool. Although individual counseling sessions are essential to clarify progress toward becoming, group sessions provide another media for developing essence. Groups present an opportunity for multiple interfacing with others, and thus contain a different kind of feedback from that available in individual sessions. The responses from peers concerning their perceptions of the behavior of others draw another dimension to the process of becoming and defining essence. The give and take in the group process supplies insights into cognitive, conative, and sensory levels of being which cannot be duplicated through interaction with an individual therapist, invaluable though that may be. The opportunity to make a presentation to self in a therapy, developmental or maintenance group allows a counselee to verify his own perceptions, values and feelings, and this is an excellent arena

in which to confirm essence. The public school counselor of existentialist orientation would find the use of groups a useful and appropriate tool. His group counseling behavior, consistent with this framework, would demand that the group work at a confrontation level. Since working at this level also demands a high degree of competency on the part of the group counselor, it follows that he should be trained in group leadership until he attains the necessary skill. Formal training in group processes may be sufficient, but probably the most satisfactory training consists both of the experience of being a group member and the development of a cognitive map of the group process through the study of various conceptual models. The model which seems most consistent with the existential philosophy is that provided by the Hill Interaction Matrix, a method of group process analysis that identifies confrontation as the most productive level of group behavior (Hill, 1965). Group counselors can be taught to work in this framework by studying Hill's films and manuals. Adolescents can also be taught to work at this level by using "It All Has to Do With Identity"--a programmed manual for teaching the group process designed to be used with students of sixth grade reading level and above (McCarty, 1968).

Identity Counseling

The concept of identity counseling is consistent with the existentialist concept of "Existence Precedes Essence" and it is particularly associated with the notion of the moment of awakening--the "Existentialist Moment." Until this moment occurs a child is not truly aware of himself. Then somewhere around puberty, a change occurs in the subjective life of an individual when he discovers himself as existing. This moment is often abrupt and represents

a dawning awareness of one's own presence in the world as a person. Prior to this, there is no such awareness. The beginning of the sense of being responsible, the Existentialist Moment, becomes a point of no return, for once this moment has occurred, there is no turning back. Innocence is over. The child is responsible for himself and must pick up his human task of defining himself (Morris, p. 112).

The Existentialist Moment probably marks the beginning of Erikson's "Identity Crisis" (1968) and the implications for counseling are profound. Surely following this moment of awareness, identity counseling should be consistently available to the adolescent. This type of counseling involves intense exploration of self--examinations of values, goals, perceptions, style of life, vocations, personal relationships, choices, etc. Discovering who he is, is an important task for the adolescent,for unless he successfully completes the process, other developmental tasks are necessarily built on weakened foundations (Erikson, 1968). The "Identity Crisis" must be successfully weathered if the young adult is to negotiate his later crises with equilibrium. The importance of having competent counseling available to the adolescent during this crisis cannot be overemphasized.

Fortunately instruments have been developed which can assist the school counselor in identifying those counselees most in need of help with the identity crisis. The Perceptions of Self inventory, designed by Winters (1966), was created as a tool to select those adolescents most in need of identity counseling. It is a quick, useful measure which can be used to select students either for group counseling or for individual counseling. The test has a cutoff point which the author believes will identify those students

who are experiencing the most difficulty with the identity crisis. These students are seen as being in a marked state of diffused self-perceptions, cannot clearly picture themselves as occupational workers, as mature citizens, and as husbands, wives, fathers, or mothers. These students have marked feelings of rebelliousness and defensiveness against adults and authority figures, at the same time they feel quite dependent upon such authority. They lack a sense of self-direction and are somewhat immature in visions of what makes for a mature functioning adult. Winters, who based his work on Erikson's theories, has designed an instrument of 52 items, with responses being made on a five point scale. With a possible range of 52-260, a score of less than 90 is considered to indicate high identity diffusion, while a score above 160 is considered to indicate low diffusion.

Another instrument which might be used by a counselor to work with young people who are in the developmental stage of the identity crisis is the Self-Appraisal and Assessment Structure prepared by Stanely R. Ostrom (1967). This is a decision-oriented approach to group guidance and is a "natural" for use by the counselor who works from an existentialist framework. It has a strong vocational orientation, while stressing educational planning and clarification of the self-concept. Ostrom's approach to clarifying identity is through three booklets which route the student through a systems approach to self-assessment.

Self-Referral Counseling

Even though a counselor may use such instruments as Winter's Perception of Self or Ostrom's Self-Assessment Booklet to suggest students who are most in need of identity counseling, the existentialist counselor would find arbitrary assignment of

counselees to individual or group sessions inconsistent with his theoretical framework. The "Existence Precedes Essence" concept implies that each individual define himself on his own terms and as his own responsibility. This precludes encouraging the usual counseling office practice of "call in" counseling. The counselor can make the counselees aware that his services exist, but each student should also be aware that it is up to him to initiate counseling. This is not to insist that "call in" counseling is never appropriate. There are times when school business makes this mandatory, but the existentialist counselor would create an environment in his office where self-referrals on the part of his counselees would be routine.

Consistent with the preference for self-referral counseling is the practice of non-assignment of counselors. The existentialist counselor would prefer to allow counselees free choice as to which of the available counselors they would wish to encounter. The common procedure of "assigning" students to counselors by alphabet, class level, or type of counseling service is untenable in the existentialist counseling center. The arrangement whereby a student is free to contact any counselor he wishes is basic to this philosophy.

Developmental Counseling

The concept of "Existence Precedes Essence" when translated into school practice implies a developmental approach to counseling rather than a remedial or a crisis approach. If man's task is to define himself, it follows that the counseling function of midwifing the self-actualizing process ought to begin with preschool play therapy and to end in a geriatric setting. In public schools

the existentialist counselor would most certainly begin his activities in elementary schools and ideally would work with families before children reached school age. It should be recognized that when a counselor works with a student from the lower grades he is dealing with a child who is not existentially awake. Thus the counselor would work extensively with parents, teachers, and other significant adults in the life of the unawakened child, for, until a student has experienced his "Existentialist Moment," the absence of awareness of self precludes self-definition and therefore, counseling is preliminary and tends toward the didactic.

The existentialist counselor will need a strong background in child growth and development, for he should be working extensively with parents and teachers on developmental problems of students. One of the effective ways in which youngsters can be helped to develop positive attitudes toward school is through parental understanding of the universality of developmental problems. The awareness that other parents are experiencing some of the same problems and successes seems to generalize into a more accepting attitude on the part of parents toward children and this awareness can be fostered through parent discussion groups. The existentialist counselor will want to begin working with parent groups in kindergarten and continue throughout the elementary grades. Also he probably will want to include teachers in group sessions, perhaps at times working only with teacher groups. This means,in all probability, the counselor must commit some of his evening hours to his job, rather than assume a teacher's working schedule.

Record Keeping: The Developmental Folder

A logical translation of the existentialist concept of "Existence Precedes Essence" involves the manner in which student records are maintained in the counseling office. To the existentialist the collection of data concerning students has actuarial purposes relative to curriculum design, but the common practice of filing information concerning an individual student in such a way that it is not immediately available to him is inconsistent with existentialist philosophy. "Pure" practice consistent with the Essence concept would suggest that a counselor develop jointly with each counselee a developmental folder in which student and counselor keep relevant data gathered during the student's educational career.

These data should most certainly include test scores, interest tests, health records, report cards, and transcripts. There should be no feeling in an existentialist counseling office that there is a hidden dossier, or mysterious educational documentaries. The student as the person most directly concerned should have access to his individual records without a tangle of red tape and bureaucratic secrecy barring availability. Another source of information which might be placed in this folder would be teachers' anecdotes. This assumes that all faculty are aware that students see these records. The fact that they do is consistent with existentialist philosophy, but it would be unethical for a counselor to show without permission a teacher's report which was assumed to be given in confidence. The existentialist counselor cannot be consistent with his philosophy and attempt to protect students from the realities of their behavior as perceived by others. The student needs to know--pleasant or unpleasant as the facts happen to be.

Clarifying Alternatives

The concept of "Existence Precedes Essence" with its sentence of freedom leaves man living an open-ended question. He must make choices and live by these choices. Since man must choose, his best chance of being human is to make as many choices as possible in awareness. The existentialist struggles constantly to maintain awareness of his freedom by trying to view every word and every act as an active choice, and hence an act of value creation

One of the counseling tasks is to help each counselee bring into awareness his own freedom with its attendant necessity for making choices which can be made in unawareness, dim awareness, or in full awareness. Each counselee, through the counseling relationship, can clarify alternatives open to him and can increase his sensitivity toward aware choices. In counseling a student can think through contradictions, ambiguities, vague goals, and fantasies which may be action inhibiting and which may have blocked growth.

The counselor and counselee also will examine consequences of defined alternatives. The counselee can be assisted to think through to logical conclusion various plans of action and in so doing become more attendant to his freedom. He can also examine the responsibility he carries for his chosen alternatives and face fully that he has no one on whom to shift this responsibility--neither counselor nor friend, neither teacher nor parent. He and he alone must accept the consequences of his actions. He also must recognize that others will be affected by his actions and choices, and he must bring to awareness the effect of his choices on others, for this represents part of his responsibility.

Counseling Contacts

A result of this emphasis on the importance of choices and freedom is that all counseling contacts are seen as potentially of value. Even a brief, three-minute interview can be an encounter. Counseling functions which other theoretical orientations may impatiently label "routine" and "clerical" can be used by the existentialist counselor to assist counselees make conscious choices with an awareness of the responsibility inescapable in those choices. Thus, every counselee contact, brief or extensive, is seen by the practicing existentialist as a potential encounter. The existentialist counselor is not in the almost chronic state of frustration which often is typical of school counselors. He does not desperately stamp his counselees "counseled" after a counselor-lecture, counselee-listen interview. He finds every routine conference, no matter how brief, of potential value.

CONCEPT: MAN IS CONDEMNED TO FREEDOM

> I am free. No matter how much I would like to deny this awe-ful fact, I cannot. I am free--and this freedom contains a paradox. Because of my freedom the pronoun "I" has absolute priority in my existence. I am the only one of my kind, and I cannot be classified, and, since I am a singular phenomenon, never to be repeated, I ought to be worthy of attention in the world. I can understand Morris' comment, "I am permanent, a datum written with indelible ink into the cosmic ledger book, never to be erased or expunged. I may be in very small print, but I am there forever. I assign to myself, there. . . an absolute value and an ultimate worth" (Morris, p. 16). Because I exist, and I am I, the world would not be quite the same without me. This is one side of the existentialist paradox.
>
> The other side of the paradox which I hold in awareness is that my existence is a great delusion, a huge joke, because, as I think of the magnitude of the universe, I know that I count for absolutely nothing. The universe is indifferent to my presence. When I die, there may be a moment of stirring, but then--nothing. Sooner than later my absence will be for-gotten, and eventually, all traces of me will be erased from the universe. I try not to think of this inevitability too much because it brings on nausea and angst, but always I am

haunted by awareness that my existence is completely irrelevant.

This is the paradox with which I live. To matter and not to matter. To be of absolute value in the world and to be of absolutely no value. These two truths are contradictory, but both are true. My subjectivity asserts the absoluteness of my value, and my reason asserts the veracity of my valuelessness. These two facts are paradoxical, but I believe them both as an inescapable fact of my being condemned to freedom.

The thought of my absolute freedom makes me angry. I do not wish to be free, to choose for myself, to be condemned to making choices "on my own." Surely there is something or someone who will direct me and eliminate the boundlessness of my responsibility. As it is, I must stand witness for all my statements as to who I am. I have total personal answerability for my involvement in life.

It is dread indeed to be free and aware of my freedom. The responsibility for all my choices carries an added burden. As I make my choices I create my value system. There is no one I can scapegoat, or blame, or burden with guilt. I would prefer an easier life, but I am free and I know it. I am the sole author of my life and I must answer for all I do. The statement that I make about myself is that I am ready to respond to each moment with authentic responsibility and am ready to speak for my performance.

This authenticity towards which I strive is illusive. I try to be honest inwardly and outwardly, but I am subject to error. At any given moment of being I seem to myself to be authentic, but in backward glances I often find that my thoughts and behaviors were inconsistent with what I was really being. I find that I cannot be consistently authentic and this failure is a source of angst in me. I suffer pain because of anxiety and guilt generated by these failures. Intellectually I know that these failures are inevitable and a part of my human condition, but emotionally I react with a sense of incompleteness, a sense of never being total, a sense of freedom which is a burden rather than an inspiration.

There are rare moments when I transcend this sense of failure. At these times I am aware of moving forward, and I have a feeling of power over myself. In these valued instances I belong completely to myself. I have the "courage to be" in full awareness, and I expec that I am truly authentic. At other times, I can only use m sentence of freedom to strive toward authenticity and bear with what courage I can the angst which comes from failure. This is the inevitable tax levied with freedom, a price tagged to my condemnation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

The existentialist counselor's model conceptualizes man as condemned to a freedom from which there is no escape. It is the degree of awareness of that freedom which differentiates the existentialist from the non-existentialist. The existentialist, having become aware of the implications of his freedom, must stand up to it best he can. The non-existentialist can enjoy the security of being other-directed.

The existentialist, with some few delightful exceptions, will be working with a non-existentialist counselee. At first glance this seems to pose some problems for the counseling relationship, for the question of values seems to be involved. Does the counselor have the right to impose his values on the counselee?

Existentialism deals with this concern rather easily for in this theoretical framework the question is irrelevant. Not only does the counselor have no right to impose his values, he <u>cannot</u>, for each man is condemned to his own freedom and must determine his own values. To raise the question of forcibly applied values is a contradiction of the existentialist's concept of man as condemned to a freedom from which there is no escape. This condition holds whether or not man is aware of his freedom.

The preceding notion in no way implies that the counselor is not his value system. He <u>is</u>, and his values are transmitted full force through his behavior. As the counselor is available to a counselee, so is the value system of the counselor available to a counselee. Without this congruency, the counselor could not be authentic, and from this congruency arises several implications for counseling.

Counseling and Responsibility

The term "responsibility" is not an unctuous, moralistic pronouncement to the existentialist counselor, but a basic fact which is derived from man's "thrown" condition in the world. He has arrived on the scene of life, and whether he likes it or not, must take responsibility. Translated into counseling behavior, the inescapability of responsibility means that the counselor will hold the counselee accountable for his behavior. Whether the counselee is existentialist, pre-existentialist or non-existentialist, he is responsible for his actions, and the existentialist counselor will shape his relationship to the counselee in a manner that is consistent with this concept. For example, if a counselee is tardy, the counselor will not "cover" for him with a late admittance slip. If a counselee forgot his books, the counselor will not make apologies to the teacher on behalf of the counselee. If a counselee misbehaves in class the counselor will not make or entertain excuses for such behavior. If a counselee makes a commitment, the existentialist counselor will expect him to hold to that commitment. The counselor will not encourage a counselee to rationalize inappropriate behavior into excused behavior.

Expecting a counselee to be responsible for his behavior does not imply that a counselor does not examine with a counselee the circumstances in which the "mistake" was made. It is part of the counselor's task to help a counselee look at and label such behavior for what it is--irresponsible. This is accomplished, of course,with empathy, understanding, acceptance and specificity, never with denial or rationalizations. The counseling relationship is warm but it also is firm. It is tender, but it also is tough. The existentialist

counselor is a source of strength, not a crying post, whipping boy or nonentity. He is an authentic person, who is responsible for his own behavior and who expects the same of his counselee.

Discipline Counseling

To discipline or not to discipline has racked the annals of professional journals for several years until finally the to-discipline stance went underground and only came up for apologies. The existentialist counselor will neither go underground nor apologize for dealing with a counselee in all aspects of his behavior, including the "mistakes" that he made, which may involve disciplinary action. The perception of a counselor turning his back on a counselee who is in trouble is inconsistent with existentialist philosophy. If a counselee is removed from a class for misbehavior, this is his counselor's concern. Together they will examine the behavior and clarify responsibility as a consequence of freedom. If a counselee is tardy or truant, or drunk, or on narcotics, this is his counselor's concern. Together they will struggle with consequences, however grim they may be. The existentialist counselor is not a fair-weather counselor, a friend until time of need. His concept of responsibility means that he is there at all times, good or bad, in success or in failure.

There will be times when the counselor will find it necessary to involve the vice principal in disciplinary action, since suspension and corporal punishment usually are the province of an administrator. Ideally, in such instances, the counselor will not send a counselee to the vice principal; he will accompany the counselee and together they will present the situation. And, following disciplinary action, counselor and counselee will again

examine the entire problem and together seek ways to prevent another such occurrence.

Counseling Content

Since man is condemned to freedom, one of his life-long tasks is to make choices. The more choices are made in awareness, including awareness of consequences, the more man is defining his essence as human. One of the major emphases of an existentialist approach to counseling is the clarifying of alternative courses of action open to the counselee. Both counselor and counselee will struggle to determine action-possibilities open to a counselee at his choice points. The counselor does not advise to a counselee's consent. Together they define, clarify, defantasize, limit and extend available alternatives. The counselee should use the counseling relationship to bring into his awareness possible alternatives so that he can make his choices, and anticipate the consequences of those choices.

The existentialist counselor, thus, is very active in the counseling relationship. He may reflect feelings, clarify and summarize, but he also initiates, suggests, and conjectures. The counselee who wishes to use the counseling relationship to bemoan rigors of an unhappy childhood, or a cruel mother, using these tragedies as excuse for irresponsible behavior in the present, is not likely to receive much encouragement from an existentialist counselor. The material thus presented may be viewed as historically interesting, but not relevant to the current here and now, and possibly, 'nothing on which much time should be spent. The past is over and irrelevant except as it is directly related to the present. The past cannot be undone, erased, or forgiven. Past actions must

stand, and for counselor and counselee to waste time bemoaning the irreversible is a futile waste of time. Understanding past experiences so as to gain insight into present behavior is productive. Verbalizing regrets concerning past actions so as to obtain symbolic forgiveness is tangential.

The content of the existential counseling session focuses on the here and now action possibilities, emphasizing a student's choices and awareness of responsibility, and does not focus on excuses, searches for forgiveness, "reasons" in historical data and verbalizations of good future intentions. What the counselee did and does, not why he behaved thus and so, receives attention in the existentialist counseling relationship.

CONCEPT: WHEN MAN CHOOSES, HE CHOOSES FOR ALL MEN

> I am condemned to freedom to define my essence. The burden of my freedom to choose for myself is great, but even greater is the responsibility of another dimension of my choices; my awareness that in every choice is the implication that this choice represents the very best possible choice for all men. In a given set of circumstances, in that time and place, the choice that I make carries with it the responsibility that this particular choice represents the most desirable way in which not only I, but all men define themselves. Since I am the only representative of mankind that I will ever know, I stand alone on my statement of man's essence. Therefore, in each of my choices I am saying--this is man according to me--this is the man I am defining so as to live a life which ought not to end in oblivion. When I make my choices, I make choices for all men.
>
> The thought of total responsibility of choosing for myself is nauseating, but the thought of choosing for all men is full of dread. I wish that I could escape both responsibilities, but I must stand on all my choices, whether made in awareness or made without a conscious sense of choosing. I must stand on my self-definition as a self-definition for all mankind even though I am unaware of so doing. But it is only when I fully realize this awe-ful responsibility that I realize the import inherent in each of my choices. I cannot say, "yes," I can lie, and murder, and cheat, and steal, and hurt unless I am willing to say that the "best" behavior for all men is to lie and murder and cheat and steal and hurt. My statement about my essence stands as a statement of the essence of all man. I agree with Sartre when he says,

> I am thus responsible for myself and for all men, and I am creating a certain image of man as I would have him be. In fashioning myself I fashion man.. When a man commits himself to anything, fully realizing that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind--in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility. Our responsibility is therefore greater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole..(Sartre in Kaufmann, p. 7).

This making of choices for myself and for all mankind gives me no place to hide, no possible way to make excuses or to expect forgiveness. Whether I am working or playing, loving or hating, I am carrying the burden of making choices which make my statement concerning the essence of my fellow men. I do not like this sustained, unrelenting pressure. I want some womblike cocoon where I can take a deep breath and say for a brief moment, "Now I can make irresponsible choices." I look back with longing on the nostalgia of childhood where in my innocence I was unaware of this responsibility. That is gone. I experienced the Existentialist Moment and am condemned to freedom, condemned to making totally responsible choices.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

To translate the meaning of the above concept into counseling behavior in specific terms is difficult as the concept permeates all behavior. The attitude of choosing for all men is somewhat *ad hoc* to choosing for one's self and mainly supplements and reinforces the burden of total responsibility which men must carry. There are, however, some logical applications in counseling behavior which might be discussed.

Pre-Existentialist Counseling: Learning Specialist

The pre-existentialist child cannot be expected to carry responsibility or to understand that he, in his freedom, is choosing for all men. Therefore, the existentialist counselor who is working with children who have not as yet become aware of their existence may at times assume somewhat the role of teacher. Young people need to be prepared through early training for the assumption of

responsibility on a voluntary basis, which, of course, is the only time that it becomes significant, but until children experience a sense of self, the counselor can only teach by example and discussion the importance of responsibility and the importance of appropriate behavior. Discussion groups, role playing,dramatic play, selected fiction, socio-drama--all these are useful techniques to assist children in analyzing choice and consequences, but the counselor cannot expect to draw all content he wishes to transmit from the children themselves. Rather, much direct, cognitive materials must be layered in so that when the Existentialist Moment occurs the process of conative integration can be begun, based on sufficient cognitive content. The existentialist counselor would see one of his responsibilities the teaching of this cognitive content in discussion groups, individual interviews, and through planning appropriate curriculum experiences.

The counselor also will see as one of his roles assisting teachers to create an optimum learning environment for each child. This implies that the counselor will be a specialist in learning, with a strong foundation in dynamics of individual behavior. The existentialist elementary school counselor should be able to specify learning procedures for each child which the teacher can apply in the classroom. It would be consistent with preparing for later responsibility for the counselor to try to insure that each child experience some success pre-existentially, for if he later is to exercise free choices, he must have a base of self from which to operate, even though he may not then be aware of this self.

Counseling for Values

The existentialist concept of choices standing as "best" choices for all mankind allows little margin for error.

This theoretical framework has been accused of being valueless and immoral--or at best amoral. Actually, the concept of choosing for all men in every choice places an enormous burden on man to choose wisely and well. Since each of us is the only representative of mankind we will ever know, our choices carry the moral implication that they are the best choice for every man to make. Thus, once the pre-existentialist phase of growth has passed, counseling for values becomes relevant, for clarifying values (choices) is basic to defining essence. For example, during the course of a counseling interview a counselee may announce that he is going to cheat on an examination. The existentialist could not and would not forbid such an action. He probably would share his own genuine reactions to the proposed act. He may feel anger and show it. He will not violate the confidentiality of the counseling relationship, however, and report the potential behavior to an administrator, but he will try to help the counselee clarify the meaning of his proposed statement as to who <u>he</u> is: a person who cheats. The counselor also will try to help the counselee realize that he is responsible for the statement of who <u>man</u> is: a person who cheats. The behavior of cheating carries within its context the implication that the "best" definition of man is one who cheats on an examination. This places an enormous burden on all choices which make a statement concerning one's own essence and the "best" essence of man. Few counselees will want to face up to this responsibility, as perhaps will few counselors. The concept of choosing for all men, basic to existentialist philosophy, requires a tough stance where forgiveness is unavailable and error irrelevant.

CONCEPT: MAN DEFINES HIMSELF THROUGH HIS ACTIONS AND ONLY THROUGH HIS ACTIONS.

I am condemned by my human state to make free choices, and I know no reprieve from responsibility for those choices. On each choice I stake my future and I am in a perpetual situation of crisis because I am never sure of the correctness of choices. I also know that the way I define my essence is through my acts. I am continually emergent in my actions.

I wish I could verbalize "good intentions" and get credit on the "books." I wish that I could get credit for planning behavior and have it count, even though I never translated those plans into behavior. But I know that my plans, my good intentions, my regrets are irrelevant until translated into action. Verbalizing a commitment to change is of no significance whatsoever until I translate my commitment into action. What I do is my essence, my self-definition. Kierkegaard taught me this: that truth exists for a particular individual only as he himself produces it in action (1944). Thus I must act before I count.

I do not restrict my conceptualization of action to overt acts, but conceive my attitudes, emotions and sensory reactions as part of the fabric of my actions. If I perform an act with reluctance, my reluctance defines some of that act. Everything which makes up my "I-ness"is relevant to my actions. The important idea of "I" is what I am in toto, and what I am now, this moment, here--not what I intend to be tomorrow, or what I intend to do tomorrow, or what I was yesterday, or what I did yesterday. Which means that I must stand in the present tense with complete accountability for what I am today, concerned about my past actions only as they are relevant for the present and concerned about my future actions only as they are relevant for the present.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

Man is condemned to freedom and thus represents all mankind. He cannot cower in a comforting fetal position, refusing to become involved, a passive spectator of life, for this becomes "best" behavior and still represents a choice. Existentialist man tries to live his life so that it counts for something, and he does this through his actions.

Vocational Counseling

The concept of man defining himself through his actions has major implications for vocational counseling. In Western culture

when a person makes a presentation of self, one of his first referents is his occupation. In pre-industrial cultures and in certain social strata, family or geographical location was a source of major identity, but for over a century a man's occupation has been an identifying characteristic.

Since occupational choice holds such an important place in current culture, counseling for vocational identity is subject to major emphasis, and has been too long minimized by school counselors. The existentialist counselor sees man as defining himself through his actions, and one of his major action-possibilities is his vocational life style. Therefore occupational choice assumes importance. It would be inconsistent with the concept of self-definition for an existentialist to view occupational choice as a one-time event; rather it is a process open to constant re-definition, reassessment, changing, expanding, contracting, dead-ending, open-ending. To the existentialist counselor vocational choice is viewed as a lifelong change, but always addressed as being of major importance in counseling.

Because vocational choice is seen by the existentialist counselor as a continuing statement, the process of exploring the world of work begins during the pre-extentialist phase of existence. Beginning in kindergarten, simple concepts of work can be transmitted through stories and explored through dramatic play. As a child moves through the grades, the counselor can work with the teacher in providing suitable curriculum expressions of vocational concepts and ideas. After a young person has experienced the Existential Moment and is aware that he is existent, the concept of self-definition through action becomes paramount in vocational essence. Certainly reading career materials, listening to career

day speakers, and intense exploration of self in occupational roles during counseling is valuable, but if the existentialist counselor is to arrange a counseling environment consistent with a philosophy based on action, he must provide means whereby a counselee can experience vocational definition through involvement in work experiences--paid or otherwise. This would be appropriate whether the student was college-bound or considered his high school education terminal. The current practice of asking a young person to define himself in a learning environment which has no semblance with reality is untenable to the existentialist counselor.

Research Implications

The existentialist concept of defining self through actions holds implications for research. If the only relevant end product of behavior is action, measuring results of counseling assumes a new dimension which is operational. Research can focus on observable behavior rather than on illusive attitudes. The effectiveness of counseling will be then demonstrable as the existentialist concept of action as a means of self-definition is translated into behavioral terms. For example, if the lessening of discipline problems as measured by the number of referrals is seen as a criterion of the effectiveness of counseling, this can be researched readily. If the number of student-initiated contacts (which imply action choices) is seen as a measure of counseling effectiveness, data can be gathered efficiently. The existentialist emphasis on action generates behavior which can be measured operationally and therefore facilitates research.

From the base of his concept of defining self through action,

the existentialist counselor would be in essential agreement with the behaviorist's approach to research. What the counselee did would be the relevant factor to which the existentialist would address himself. The search for measuring the elusive self-concept could be abandoned once and for all, for until a counselee translated a change of self-concept into observable behavior, such change would be considered irrelevant.

"Why" versus "What" Counseling

The existentialist counselor who subscribes to the defining-through-action concept will never ask "Why?" of a counselee. He would consider this irrelevant. Rather, his focus would be on "what." For example, the counselee who came in with a discipline referral would not be faced with a futile cross-examination of being asked to explain the causes of his behavior (a procedure which is notorious for meeting the infantile needs of the counselor) but would be asked to report the "what" of the circumstances. What were his behaviors, and what does he propose to do to correct the situation? And, since the counselee is only in charge of himself and his actions, obviously any suggestion for correction which demands a change of behavior by another person, for example, a teacher, would not be seen as a realistic suggestion on the part of either counselee or counselor.

This emphasis on "what" behavior of the counselee permits the existentialist counselor to avoid the pitfall of defending a colleague. Since focus is on actions of the counselee, little attention is given to actions of the teacher, or other persons concerned. This may distress a counselee who is accustomed to using a counselor as a sympathetic sounding board against whom to itemize the sins of others. The insistence of his existentialist

counselor on talking about his, the counselee's, behavior may at first be annoying, but as a counselee grows in self-respect and self-acceptance will be refreshing because it is productive. Perhaps one of the reasons that counseling is seen so often as being of little value by a counselee is that the counseling interview has been allowed to deteriorate into a scapegoating, self-eliciting, unproductive session. The emphasis on "what" counseling, consistent with the concept of action, should prove far more satisfactory to a counselee and to an existentialist counselor.

Counseling for Commitment

There is an existentialist moment when a counselee (and counselor) will decide to define his essence with courage or will decide passively to resign his humanity. The courage to be requires that he live a continuous confrontation with his being-in-the-world. His commitment to a decision-quality of human existence can be verbalized in the counseling office. Living that commitment involves action outside the counseling office.

Commitment stands on the statement, "This I am; this I believe; this I do. I am the being, the believing, the doing." Commitment is not a subscription to something external to one's life, but an awareness, an attitude, a clear and feelingful recognition of being fully present in a moment, making choices of that moment and standing on the consequences of those choices. Participation in life is a consequence of genuine committedness to living where one freely chooses one's being in action. If a person takes responsibility for his life and expresses it through participation, he is totally involved, totally committed (Bugental, 1965, pp. 334-340).

CONCEPT: THE ENCOUNTER--THE "I-THOU" RELATIONSHIP DEFINES COUNSELING PROCESS AND CONTENT

When I think of the I-Thou relationship I become uneasy at times. What I must do to create this relationship is to somehow communicate my essence, open, uncensored--and vulnerable. I do not always want to do this, partly because it will be, as it must be, only a shadow of my "I-ness," and also because in reaching I to Thou I am risking pain of being misunderstood or unaccepted. I would rather be safe in my obscurity. I would like to hide behind an anonymous mask, then no other could encounter the "I" of me, nor I the "Thou" of him. Thus we never meet--and hurt--but also, we never meet--and love.

So I seek out the encounter--I to Thou--for here is where I exercise my being. As I create the bridge from I to Thou in my counseling office, I create the counseling relationship. I make my commitment to being-in-the world and to counseling, aware that the encounter, which is the counseling relationship, opens a two-way channel. In the encounter we live each other, reciprocating uniqueness and singularity I to Thou. As I enter the counseling relationship I commit myself to becoming an instrument of change in both of us. I enter the arena of another's life space, vulnerable to all that is there. I am not neutral, but am involved and committed. I risk pain and error, but I do this in awareness that encounter confirms my humanness,my authenticity, and my essence, just as it confirms the humanity, authenticity and essence of Thou--all mankind. As I comprehend the essence of another I take him into myself and allow myself to be taken into him, throwing open the gates to my being. We both experience an increasing inner richness.

This journey into the life space of Thou is not easy for me. I must lower my defenses, allow my shields to go down, and, in a curious fashion, turn myself off, partially losing awareness of myself as a being with needs, drives, and perceptions as I try to enter the awareness of another. I do not know exactly how I do this, except that the act, I know, requires deep concentration, intense involvement and maximum energy on my part.

In or out of encounter I strive for perfect authenticity, but never am I complete, so I never outwardly transmit exactly what I am inwardly. I am never wholly congruent, but struggle constantly toward becoming, always in the process of self-actualizing, never self-actualized. This imperfection becomes a source of angst to me. I would like to be completed, but I cannot attain total authenticity. All I can do is to reserve time, alone or with another, for introspection scanning my progress with charity for myself, patiently allowing a margin for error. Perfect authenticity, I know, is unattainable as is perfect encounter, but a degree of both is basic to the I-Thou relationship and to my process of becoming.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

In the I-Thou relationship a counselor enters a counselee's world and shares that which he sees there with the counselee. There is openness and mutuality in the relationship. The existentialist counselor allows the world of the counselee to unfold during an encounter, but the counselor is not passively listening, rather actively attempting to enter the counselee's world. The climate is generated from empathy, congruency, and specificity with the counselor, through transmission of understanding, attempting to increase the ability of the counselee to experience existence as real, thereby becoming more aware of his potentialities and alternatives. The counselee is assisted through counseling to sign his signature to his own statement of essence.

Subject-Object Dichotomy

The existentialist counselor views his counselee not as a statistical norm but as a unique, dynamic individual. Stress is placed on developmental counseling rather than remedial or prescriptive counseling. The counselee is not viewed as an object to whom things are done, but as subject with whom action-possibilities are explored. The counselee is treated with dignity as a person, whether he is child, adolescent or adult. The counselor encounters him, regardless of age, as a being of value, a person, who, like the counselor, is engaged in defining essence out of ambiguous freedom.

Scheduling Considerations

The existentialist counselor who encounters rather than reacts avoids one of the major frustrations of counselors who require a relatively long period of time with each counselee before they feel

that they are "really counseling." The requirements of a schedule of hour, half-hour, or whatever for counseling sessions is not basic to the concept of encounter. Rather, the I-Thou relationship can occur in a moment and can represent an intense experience. The existentialist does not measure counseling in time, but in depth of relationship. The intensity of the encounter depends mainly on openness, authenticity and risk-taking willingness of the counselor. The counselor who is not committed to involvement is not likely ever to create encounters, no matter how generous his time schedule. The counselor who is committed finds the encounter a frequent occurrence. A program change, a discipline referral, a test result communication, a student-initiated interview--all provide opportunity for encounter. Three minutes spent with a counselee at an intense level of involvement may be more productive than thirty minutes spent as strangers. Thus the existentialist counselor does not find the realities of school scheduling an impossible limitation on encounter. He knows that the limitations lie within himself.

CONCEPT: TWO WORLDS EXIST--THE WORLD OF OBJECTIVE REALITY AND THE WORLD OF SUBJECTIVE REALITY

> I exist in two different worlds simultaneously and each is relevant to my existence. One is the world of objective reality which exists outside myself and is governed by natural, scientific laws, which have long been a focal point of man's inquiry into his physical environment. My didactic education has consisted in the main of becoming acquainted with these natural and man-made laws. I cannot function in my culture without attending to them. I need to know the reality of this objective environment and I need to know that a chain of events will follow if I choose to violate its laws. The laws of this objective reality are generally predictable and theoretically are all knowable by man. If I live against these logical laws I will be out of harmony with my environment. For example, if I choose to eat or to drink in violation of my bodily needs, my flesh, muscles and tissues will react negatively. I can learn these laws cognitively and they are generally predictable. My objective world is an

orderly, scientific and rational world, whose texture is derived from nature and from culture.

I also exist in another world--the world of subjective, phenomenological reality. Here resides my individual perceptions of what is, and it is Truth for me. I can only partially communicate this world to others, for I am not fully aware of its totality. Much of my subjective world exists below my level of conscious awareness, although some of it is available to me on demand. Some is never available, but lies in the dim recesses of my being. I know that all others exist in a subjective reality which has verity for them, but they are encapsulated within theirs just as I am within mine. I would like to communicate the full reality of my world to others, but I cannot. I cannot fully communicate even that portion of which I am aware. Whether I use the symbolism of language, art, or music, communication is incomplete. Just as my cognitive processes tap primarily the objective world, so do my conative and sensory processes tap my subjective world. My feelings, emotions, loves, hates, fears, longings--all dwell in this subjective world. And my loves, hates, fears and longings are beyond logic. They do not adhere to natural or man-made laws. They belong to a fluid, ambiguous, reality, conforming to no truly predictable chain of events. My subjective world is largely irrational and operates from a psychological set of laws which are only dimly known to me or to any other.

Both of these worlds unite in the essence that is me, and as I am becoming, I seek harmony of the two. I neither reduce nor deny the external reality contained in my existence for my being-in-the-world implies a unity with objective reality. I am not a subject who perceives an object, but rather I exist with my objects. I am with and a part of every object I encounter, which then becomes a part of me. I create my world and give meaning to it through synthesizing my two worlds--objective and subjective--into my unique signature of essence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

The conceptualization of two worlds which exist side by side, but which operate from a different set of laws synthesizes the constructs of phenomenology and realism. The rational world of the realists and the irrational world of the psyche are blended into the essence of being as existential man defines himself. Through his actions in-the-world man announces his individuality--object becomes subject and subject becomes object. Counseling must harmonize and integrate both.

Ipsative-Normative Implications

The concept of two different worlds operating from two different sets of laws is a particularly useful construct for the existentialist school counselor who must deal with the objective world of the school and the subjective world of the counselee. The concept of two worlds allows a counselor to use tools derived from trait and factor orientation, while he uses processes consistent with phenomenological constructs. The existentialist counselor can explore with a counselee his phenomenological world, but together they can find useful the results of objective measuring instruments.

Individuation-Acculturation Implications

The concept of two different worlds also has implications for the individuation process and the acculturation process. The individuation of a counselee, whereby he defines his uniqueness, his differences, is a major focal point of existentialist counseling with its commitment to the creation of essence, but individuation has long been traditional to all theoretical approaches to counseling The process of acculturation--helping a counselee learn the rational laws of the objective world--has not traditionally been addressed by the counseling profession, who has seen this process as a responsibility of teachers, administrators, parents, the state and the church, rather than counselors.

The existentialist counselor, as he attempted to synthesize with a counselee the two worlds of the latter, would give some attention to this world of objective reality, attending to the acculturation process more seriously than would other counseling orientations. He would see as part of his major commitment the

clarifying with a counselee the realities of existing in-the-world, and consequences of denial of these realities. For example, the counselor's involvement in the total essence of a counselee implies integration of the two worlds and this integration may involve discipline counseling. The recognition of the need for cognitive input from the objective world, such as information concerning vocations, schools, test data, etc., requires that a body of facts be available from the counseling office. A paraprofessional may collate and transmit these facts, but the existentialist counselor would see this as important whether or not he was directly involved. The rules of the school, requirements of attendance, performing of homework, conforming to behavior standards-all would seem to be appropriate content for the process of acculturation, for all require that a counselee come to terms with his objective world. The counselor assists in the internalization of a counselee's objective world into his subjective world, and thus counseling no longer represents an irreality, a way station in phantasy land, but enables the relationship to generalize to existence outside the counseling office. Counseling, which integrates the individuation and the acculturation process, is consistent with a philosophy which postulates two worlds--an objective reality and a subjective reality.

IN SUMMARY

Translating the philosophical foundations of existentialism into counseling practice has been the purpose of these remarks. Existentialism is a very personal statement and the presentation of concepts has been made in this vein. It is hoped that the impersonal application of the concepts to counseling behavior

will also have personal meaning to practicing counselors. The encounter with the concepts--I-Thou Relationship, Existence Precedes Essence, Man Condemned to Freedom, Man Choosing for All Men, Man Defining Himself Trhough Action and Existence in Two Worlds--has been an intense experience for the writer. Perhaps it will have meaning for the reader.

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